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hesitant bodies

by julie homenuik

A Creative Writing Project  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
through English Language, Literature and Creative Writing  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Arts at the  
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada  
2006

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Direction du  
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file    Votre référence*

*ISBN: 978-0-494-17027-4*

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*ISBN: 978-0-494-17027-4*

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abstract

---

many bodies strewn across these pages in various stages of desire.

they are measured with the muscles beneath the skin.

they are embedded with nervous anticipation.

each poem is a negotiation of space anxious with desire.

curved lines into sheets waiting to be touched.

dedication

---

to all the boys and girls who have made my body blush.

## acknowledgements

---

stirling  
my mom  
my dad  
di brandt  
stephen pender  
cate hundleby  
my friends  
my family  
and musashi  
for all your patience, support, and inspiration.

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---

*I accept and I collect upon my body  
the memories of your devotion*  
-Antony and the Johnsons

—anticipation—

at the farm

---

on the cement  
between the henhouse  
and the grainhouse  
we sat with kittens  
between our sweaty young skin  
and t-shirts carefully tucked

we never understood  
why they didn't want  
our small undefended nipples  
or why we were so desperate  
for the pricking suckle

we struggled against the clawing escape  
mourned the bright scratches  
across our stomachs  
over and over again in the summer heat

through the window

---

i remember staring  
at the field overturned  
at the bits of stalk  
that reached with jagged elbows  
at the maple where the first branch  
made me beg my father  
to take me down

while i lightly pressed  
against the bedpost  
slow pelvis  
until my mother looked  
and told me to stop

in mom and dad's bed

---

nights when the thunder  
slammed against my window  
threatened to fly in against  
my walls exploding glass  
and splintering wood  
i would wait anxiously  
for my fingers to unclench  
and my skin to de-goose

i'd dash down the hall  
skinny legs and big eyes  
to scramble across sharp knees  
and groaning chests  
barely shifting to make room  
as i burrowed between

only here are the windows  
impenetrable and thunder  
a weak incident of nature

after school

---

*you're the daddy*  
*so you have to lie on top*  
the instructions she gives  
on the rough berber carpet  
of the four by two closet  
cleared of shoes and dolls

in the empty house  
my ears catch familiar burning  
the sound of breath hushes  
long and hollow through  
with moving pelvis

we never kiss  
we never stray  
from embrace  
our soft, little girl parts  
press and rub together  
through cotton shorts  
tiny heart underwear

farmlands

---

the hills create a texture  
something i run my hands through  
the wet grass rough split tight skin  
the small webs in the three vertices  
that do not allow us to swim

i trace the contours of the land  
with dew wrinkled fingertips  
stumble over fences trail epidermis  
on which i lead you running



the first time

---

i saw you	young
you were	blond
in a truck	spiked
with your	cocky
father	smirk

from behind a pine tree  
in my front yard i stared  
dust lifted by the tires  
sticks to my fuzzy skin  
i pull a blood tipped pebble  
from my shin you pull in  
next door      even then  
                 years before i knew the tight  
                 roundness of your muscles  
                 the bulging wide thickness  
                 the stroke of your finger  
                 across my cheek subtle  
                 hidden in the pet of the cat  
                 i held in my arms

even then  
my soft  
haired body  
coiled  
a little  
tighter

## the neighbour boy

---

you were always too big for the forts we built in the tree lying horizontal that found a line through the others to fall its branches belled like a skirt lacy and boned and even later when i left the leaves were still clinging wound tight and revealed brittle veined and patched with skin by hungry insects your brother and sister and i would crawl through with grass stew and stone cookies snapping only the thinnest branches but you were always too big i could never spread wide enough to let you in not even your finger

undress and put this on

---

i always wanted to be naughty  
play the sexy doctor  
but i didn't have the gumption  
i think it was a medical condition  
i should have had looked at

always too afraid of my body  
i believed my limbs could disembark  
that all systems could fail  
flailing fingers and wet pants  
the old wooden wagon not passing  
ambulance regulations

so i hovered at the edge of your wrist  
pressed between thin bones  
tried to get a sense of what  
your heart might look like  
without your clothes

the starting line

---

i can't imagine how this began how you pushed your hand up my leg along the striped nylon thigh high stockings i wear squeezing my thighs that plump my flesh on my inner leg between the tight edge and my underwear and i swear i won't fall to prove i am ready with the beer you snuck from your daddy's fridge and the hour before my parents come home because i know it is a dare a test and i want the touch and i want your hand but all i can feel hear taste is the cold basement cement on my feet the blaring cartoons the yeasty tin of beer drying my breath at the constricted line you linger your eyes on the tv and i don't move but you still take back your hand

back porch sliding doors

---

i remember sitting there  
with my hands in your pants  
wondering what the hell  
i was waiting for

the warm summer wood  
of the deck on our feet  
we sat inside and out  
on the sliding rail  
splitting carpet and brick

and sometimes when  
i remember you so thick and heavy  
in my grasp  
the screen is between us  
the malleable wire  
pushing miniscule graphs  
into my zygomatic arch  
into your scapula

grade nine love

---

i held his hand.

i did.

walking from his house

to mine.

it was ballsy.

i think he liked it.

all because i held your hand

---

i sprain my ankle stumbling over shoes  
in desperate grasps for footholds  
the sinewy blondness of your forearm  
not a strong enough clutch  
as the metal edges of the stairs  
jut against my vertebrae  
raw marks down my back  
wood paneling my foot leverage  
as our bodies keep adjusting closer

all we have done every part  
of your lips and tanned skin  
it is my hands that undo you  
it is our hands that leave me marked

i could always find the sex scene on the first try

---

we were like the characters  
in the books i would sneak  
from my mother's shelf  
when i was a kid

all desperate tightness  
swollen manhood  
quickenened globes  
of womanly flesh

we even had a barn  
filled with hay  
a slick muscular body  
and my too young legs  
wrapped with yours

they would say  
we were burning lust



inhibition

---

naked  
in the yard  
under the stars

you tell me  
someone might see

between acts

---

i cannot believe  
the audacity of you  
taking my breast  
into your mouth

pulling

out

and

in

the upper barn doors wide  
open like the balcony  
i can see your mother  
walking in the yard

i really feel you  
should be embarrassed  
in this early reveal

backyard games

---

we played in lawn chairs  
face to face over a plastic table  
slowly we laid down  
cards and our poker faces  
dripping sweat into grass  
peeling slowly away  
my eyes only revealing  
the towel on your lap

i just wanted one peek

—turning a season—

---

an october hand hold *where would you  
like to sit? up here? that would be great*  
*thanks* peeling the unnecessaries i have  
only a jacket stinging cracks my  
knuckles and bloody traces seep in  
branches over them *so. so.* stuttering  
slightly over pizza we disengage our  
coats from the backs of our chairs i can't  
remember whose crumpled bills slipped  
onto the marble floor i think i pay you  
wouldn't couldn't the sucking heat  
swallowing cold deep over the table an  
opened door in a small restaurant should  
i have worn a skirt i don't think you look  
at me stealing peaks through my split  
lashes *shall we go?* i barely remember  
the coolness caressing the brick spaces  
we walk between—

---

this starts with a boy another boy  
different boy *i think we should break up*  
who stubbornly left me clasping roses in  
the rain pinning them upside down  
above my bed curl slowly up you will  
always start with this and then an  
urgency the anotherdifferent boy  
suffocates with the white sterility i  
remember the words *will you change?*  
*no. i can't be with you if you don't*  
*want...* so i slam the car door with the  
second set of flowers the boy ever gave  
me in two years *two years! and he*  
*doesn't even know i hate roses* crying to  
a pinholed friend next to my mouth and i  
begin to remember you are leaving—

---

two months ago when i was still  
clamouring for colour and flowers that  
weren't roses your voice twisted the  
magnets in the ribbon of my machine  
you ask *i was just wondering i don't  
know if you'd like to go out sometime* i  
ignore you out of obligation i have to  
pretend the last night hand brushing  
through the crowd and smoke to touch  
you wasn't mine you soft and clouded *i  
didn't expect to see you here! it's good  
to see you how have you been remember  
that class last year and wasn't it great  
can i get your number so i can call you  
sometime* i hesitate here in the hugs the  
hugs i gave in the act of reunion but i  
relished the shape of your back the sharp  
shoulder blades linger under my slow  
retreating hands *sure* but the guilty  
pounding in my lungs so i erase your call  
realigning my norths and souths—

---

but somewhere somewhere my poles had  
been left reversed and there you pushed  
and pushed so i could see the unsettled  
the memory of the numbers leaping from  
the machine they dive into me i welcome  
them *i can't help it i've always been*  
*good with numbers it's just a number*  
*just the numbers* two months of brain  
snapping to the seven digit pattern  
eternal looping the song stuck in the  
head from ones and zeros to ones to  
zeros it is after i have pierced the stems  
into plaster i am driving deep breaths  
with a blind spot check and a left hand  
turn i call you back two months of  
punching out your number and *hello?*  
the plastic is greasy in a fast food foyer i  
am cold and shaking trying not to press  
the receiver too hard against my ear  
*would you like to go out to dinner*  
*tonight? tonight? okay, yeah, sure.*  
*where? pizza? there's a place just*  
*around the corner from your place...you*  
*remember where i live? yeah, remember*  
*you showed me that night...oh yeah. i*  
wonder if this is hasty but i remember  
you are leaving—



---

i want to tell this story with october  
the fall skittering leaves across pavement  
golden grates the suck of heat catching  
wet leaf flow and clear crisp skies  
the slow gathering of colour—

---

post-date *would you like to come in?* i sit  
on the wobbly computer chair you are  
facing me sinking off the bed smushed  
in the alcove a cot really and you with a  
guitar musty basement and penthouse  
hiding the mould under the sink i  
pretend not to notice you sing *don't*  
*leave me high don't leave me dry*  
nervous nervous nervous *would you like*  
*to look at a photo album* there is you  
studying shirtless and a girl on a rock  
that no longer is yours we are circling a  
kiss these walls do not let us stretch out  
you reach under my shirt a cursory  
check i am thudding sitting up *i'm sorry*  
eyes wide wide wide we take to sleeping  
on the daybed in the living room—

---

you show me your apocalypse now  
poster the film project with the boy in  
the wall the english leather and kurt  
vonnegut later i will see nicholas cage  
something about family and i think of  
you as the box on the floor we curl every  
night in the livingroom next to the stairs  
you sneaking cigarettes in the bathroom  
pressing play on the mix tape i will take  
with me when we're done—

---

you are writing a paper on music i  
want to talk to you but i know you  
are trying trying for something so  
i'm quietly cupped against the wall  
pretending to sleep a roommate stops  
by your room *i had such awesome  
sex last night i'm so sore you?* you  
mumble something and the  
roommate realizes i am there and i  
always am so noticeable clinging to  
the sheets on the bed i'm never in  
even with my clothes on under a  
sheet i am cold—

---

i am waiting waiting for you deeply  
inhaling the tiredness of smoke sex  
beer *you didn't stand me up you*  
*didn't stand me up* but the  
sympathetic glances hemming  
hawing lower lips to upper people  
keep pouring more and more and i  
insist *sorry something happened*  
*please stop by this address* scrawled  
a taped note banging with the screen  
door *shouldn't shouldn't shouldn't*  
the lips begin to disappear in the  
tightness driving away as i wave  
them on from the doorway *pool hall*  
*gun fuck sorry all trashed and the*  
*kitchen* i stare at the gaping wall raw  
edges of white dipping into black  
internal struts a jagged path  
preventing fire behind the  
compressed board five guys against a  
gun *you're okay right* escape to  
fighting a wall—

---

i insist on pictures bloody knuckles  
scraped with gypsum crowded  
around the hole i could crawl inside  
matte finishing i cannot be mad for  
this but *why should i stay?* stare  
*because i like you—*

---

in the night there is nothing but  
scattered sleep my body tense  
against yours i cannot say what i  
want the night we almost but we  
were drunk the moments staccato but  
i couldn't make them fluid touch  
touch and you warm in my hand so *i*  
*can't sleep with you i just i can't* i  
meant now but i couldn't explain you  
never asked *okay* so i am trapped  
into myself and expectant skin—

---

the day before you leave i slip down  
the stair to your bed early sun and  
dew *go ahead and just come in* you  
told me so the wood creaks in the  
musty air the household kitten  
desperately shackles my ankles  
mewing low-bellied want i close her  
behind the kitchen door and work  
towards your windowless room  
maneuver under your sheets my  
itchy wool jacket against your cotton  
warmth *i have a present for you*  
opened in the spread of light  
tied with a necklace you will be  
wearing when i see you a year  
later—



---

i stop by during your leaving we  
have been slowly tearing we have  
given up the daybed and the kitten  
your friend teases with the broom  
stick moans beside us *hey man come  
back later* but still teases i am  
awkward wanting you finally say  
*listen i want to say good bye in  
private* hugs i walk away with a mix  
tape—

---

i never saw you with your shirt off i tell  
your friend we never slept together *you*  
*must have meant a lot to him he 'd sleep*  
*with anything* but this doesn't make me  
sure and in your absence i buy a book  
about kittens and baby holders but i  
think it's a metaphor and think about  
watching a movie about nam but i am  
afraid my shared knowledge will repel  
you afraid the attraction is in the lack it  
was the drained whiteness and i sucked  
in your pigment *you would like me now i*  
*am different i think* you send me  
forwards you send only to me and your  
mother except for one fall *wish you were*  
*here wish you were here wish you were*  
*here—*

—positives and negatives—

truth or dare

---

i wait as  
the fire turns  
my legs burnt  
beneath my jeans  
the wooden smoke  
sifts through my hair  
a lawn chair measures  
squares across my thighs

i am waiting  
because i know  
the game will go  
this way that the boys  
can't resist the unlikely  
magnetism of our similarly  
sexed skin their logical minds  
titillated by this press of positives

i waited  
for the edge  
of your shirt  
to stretch slightly  
as my hand slid up  
your night cooled skin  
toward the smooth curves  
and i could thumb gently once

i never loved you

---

until i closed my eyes listening  
to your raspy toned thoughts wander  
over theories of replanted trees  
and the pen that taps your leg  
in cotton muffled beats  
catching with the late summer air  
the hint of cool teasing the heat  
a rhythm in breath tremors  
through my chest the slow crawl  
of even tones through the grass  
i pluck smoothly revealing  
the perfectly new green to white  
translucent from the sleeve  
of deep sun dried jade

picking blades of grass  
with shut eyes and your  
stereo buzz voice  
wishing for a blade  
long enough to tickle  
just beneath my skirt

pain

---

i want you to punch me  
i've never been,  
i'd like something  
to be a first with you

something we can build upon  
commemorate  
something, perhaps,  
we can tell our grandchildren

i know you know how,  
with you, at least,  
i know i'll bruise  
deep eggplant purple

you say i'm an exhibitionist

---

smooth hairless like a movie  
in soft light and makeup  
but this is daylight bare  
veinless unsunkissed and small  
virgin at 25 it shows in the contrast  
between where you let us see and won't

your shyness appalls me  
when others let so much more hang out

only for a moment do i feel the burning  
for the hundreds walking and wading  
with nothing around me  
i can't tell you your name  
but one is bigger than the other  
you hang a little to the left  
i barely care but you  
you are tied  
tight and nervous

even i want to touch them

turn in the sun listen to the mumble spread  
like pinkness  
i could have never imagined your penis  
like the leather of your face  
so invariable from your body

you are wavy in the air as you walk  
but no one notices when your cherry red  
underwear lay discarded on the beach

potshroomsbeermolsoncanadianpotkeithsmoose  
chocolateheadcoveredmushroomsandfrenchmassage  
your penis bangs softly against your thigh  
louder than the soft drawl of your voice

she is right to keep her top on

hours later i still stare

i will harden with a cool breeze  
surreptitiously i cast a breath downward  
to save me from becoming hopeless-  
ly downward and triangular  
shall i sidle up to you who is one half the size of the other  
and feel better or worse in your presence

she ties a rope between waterworn wood  
a tightrope or a tent  
but i tighten more  
to brush away the sand from the underside of her—

hey man watch your camera  
i—  
just watch your camera

she was hiding nothing

what am i looking at  
i close my eyes and listen  
your voice crawls  
through my chest  
sweat curls into  
the small of my back  
now    you know

my left is more than my right  
in proportion size and gradation  
is it sinister to wonder if you notice

only in water  
where things carry farther  
will you finally take off your top



## kissing games

---

at six, i would chase a boy from room to room at a birthday party  
spittled and stretched wanting to pin my lips to your cheek  
i was going to marry him, i was sure of it

at fourteen, i could pull out anything with a decent spin  
eager wrists and giggles daring my tongue  
i was going to make him, even if he didn't want to

at thirty, i don't think these ploys will fly anymore  
my lips are puckered and my arms are flexed  
i have my best kissing face on

but i'm not playing and no one's going to find it cute

your touch

---

i do not think  
i fancy your hands  
touching my skin.

it is not smooth clear healthy  
or nicely tanned.

it is a rough approximation  
of what skin should be.

i do believe  
it is best  
if i am peeled.

snap my neck  
like a banana  
dig in, grab hold,  
strip me down.

you can observe as i turn  
from frozen blue to blood.

when i finally let your hand  
stroke mine,  
smooth and liquidized,  
you will see  
my heart beat  
a little faster at your touch.

afternoon nap

---

when i finally kiss you  
smoke licked lips  
and vodka lemon  
it has been years  
since i lay stiff spined  
on my stomach warm  
with sun flecked dust  
nerves raised with each  
landing a prickle of damp  
the cumulative drop  
worked over thin skinned  
ejection of bladed shoulders  
the spread of salt in pinked  
dimple grooves left in memory  
of unclasped bras that dug  
in the sweated body  
the wet bead over a mole  
along the extended curve  
flattened breast with the thought  
of kissing you shooting  
jaggedly down my chest  
through my stomach  
with nervous skin  
and bunched sheets

throat love

---

the rhythm and sound  
of their small throats  
calling back across  
to each other

little catches in their breath  
her then him and  
her then him and  
her then him and

*Speak to me under the words*  
she said to her lover

maybe your husband/boyfriend/son/lover/boss hit you so hard you need stitches maybe you're leaving and that's why you sit pale faced at the train station dark sunglasses but in the turn of your head and your neck sore from the blow a bit of stitch a bit of gauze a bit of fuschia swell

or maybe it's an eyelift suddenly you feel old or your husband/boyfriend/son/lover/boss told you you weren't looking so chipper so happy so good so pretty that morning so you went to the big city to fix that droopy lid you've always had but when you were young it was cute and the spray of cracked rivers from the meeting of the outer lashes stretched flat and now you are going home hoping they'll stop or start staring at your too wide eyes and girl you've never looked so chipper

or maybe you were in an accident stray glass and chipped eyes the slow recoil of retina and it is not a limp of oldness but of brokenness and now your husband/boyfriend/son/lover/boss needs you back at work and it hurts every time you take a step on the cracked ankle to knee press of brake and the shudder of pole like lightening up your entire body but you refuse to take an elevator because you just said you were sick you felt you didn't want anyone to know it was you and it wasn't the windshield but the bottle on the seat next to you while you were driving and it busted like your leg and you were the one in the paper that begged to go unnamed

or maybe did it yourself you have no husband/boyfriend/son/lover/boss and it was the worst the deepest the last before you passed out the rest stripes that i could maybe see if i was closer stripes like paper cuts across your thighs tiny pink slits and every time you bend you think of how they caught you how they found you bleeding from your right blue eye and it must be blue because you are so pale dark eyes would wipe out your skin your hair your everything and maybe they have flecks of gold green brown grey and how you think you can feel each cut stretch gape open under your pin-striped pants seeping tiny crimson drops and thankful you wore black on such a leaky day just so your hair and your face look so white that maybe no one would wonder why you wore over sized round sunglasses inside and no one would slip their eyes in the in between your eye and the lens and see the gauze and the stitches and the crusting blood pulling taut your tissue skin

—x's and y's—

hey there pretty eyes

---

every morning your blue eyes  
blew my eyes your morning i  
mourn you're ever blue your every  
blue in my morning my mourning  
of your eyes in the blue  
every day i see in mourning

blow my blue every eye my  
every morning blue

terminal

---

you'll be standing by a pole  
arms crossed, waiting,  
clock watching, searching  
between snowflakes for me.

and i, well, i  
will not stop  
to merely shake  
your hand.



one good date

---

you came out in socks as if shoes  
were an intricate contraption  
you couldn't assimilate  
so they were left  
in haste

primula

---

prim little rose  
paled magenta  
brighting yellow proudly  
centre of your room  
centre of your table  
perfectly pressed ruffles

prim prim little rose  
curling under at the heat  
of fingers stroking petals and stem  
waning purple sanguine dusking tips  
hot hot in this room

little little rose  
languid in the pot  
drooping weak in the leaves  
green and greener at the edge  
wilting in the heat we made  
sighing with our sound

entangled

---

i could wrap you tighter  
a blanket cocoon,  
twist the sheet tight  
with my ankles,  
close your eyes  
and trap you here.

this spring is a stretching

---

it      will    s t r e t c h    l o n g  
until each winter shackle  
eases            away  
and  
          i  
              am  
              naked

in this massive bed

---

living three hours apart  
our relationship is misplaced  
and dangling  
we make love on the couch  
while the movie plays robots  
and we are running on and on

we are a mathematical sentence  
an operation of orders we need  
brackets and pauses  
we should insert  
numbers and words  
that produce the right answer  
that leave us whole

our but limbs of tangle jumbled  
naked lying modified everywhere  
bracketless without form

consummate "c"s

---

if you leave room  
i'll curve you  
line your concavity  
quiet and tight

i tug and shift,  
demanding a plane  
in which to square my blankets  
parallel and perpendicular  
to the mattress to the frame to the floor

the edges are my axis  
a quadrant formed by the x and y  
and z if i wish to go deeper  
an alphabetic exploration

we'll lie in the dark  
configurations (you, me)  
plotted here randomly

i'll work out an equation  
i can write myself in  
where i may enumerate  
infinite in the brackets  
of your cosine  
you'll never grow tired  
of stretching into the slightest of curves  
together we'll never reach the edge of my bed

comforter tents

---

in this light blue  
filtered through blankets  
your features are muted  
and the need to synchronize  
my voice to your face  
presses inward on my throat

words meld in the sticky hot  
breathe in this slate lit cave  
i can say anything and know  
you'll only watch my lips  
move fluid across my face



a valentine

---

i am forever riding trains to you  
in the heated sweat between our mouths  
we lie face to face on matching pillow cases  
the comforter barely hems in our shoulders

i waited for hours with a cold  
in the february snow reading jane eyre  
until you finally arrived nervous in the seeing  
me again the revolution of shapes colours  
over and over again ready to match to you

we hold hands melt snowflakes in the wool  
i want to kiss you at the bus stop sniffing  
and you tell me it is okay backed by grey factories  
and muffled echoes through the snow  
nervously skirting your feet with my eyes

i roll over fit my bum against your stomach  
every night i adjust my body to fit closer  
i ask if you are forever waiting for me  
like the press of heat along my back

apartment breathing

---

the light folds through the curtains  
onto the books their dusty spines  
the boneless lumps of shirts pants  
stuffed corners under loose sheets  
the desperate dives from hamper  
limp clings in the failed attempt  
motionless figures whisper cautious  
under the rolling reverberations  
of the cars pushing though air

suck in the voices of the walls  
with the lift fall lift of us  
two bodies pressed tight in bed

sharing

---

i tell myself i could not  
sleep without you, pressing  
people and objects to my side  
when you are not there

a desperate pillow clutched  
between my thighs, telling  
my girlfriends i may cling  
to them in my sleep—please  
don't mind it's force of habit  
ha ha joke smile—but secretly  
i know this is not true

i crave the stretch of leg between  
sheets the sprawling stretch a radius  
of unblocked paths for feet arms  
and the undivided attention  
of the comforter

don't

---

you tell me not to pluck the hairs from your arms,  
from your stomach, from the insides of your thighs,  
but i want to test the tenacity of your skin, how willing  
is it to part with this thing it has been pushing out  
for so many months

you tell me not to inspect the texture of your skin  
the varying purples that press underside your pulse filled  
extremities, but i want to check the constancy of your skin,  
not be caught off guard while you skin secretly laughs  
at my naivety

you tell me not to suck the blood to the surface  
of your neck, shoulder blade, flesh covered third rib,  
but i want to question the mark assert my authority  
on your skin, pushing it through days of colour  
for my inquisitive eyes

you tell me not to so i don't

but when you are flushed and sweaty moving in me,  
i am lightly scratching red speckled stripes down your back  
feeling the skin swell, watching the colour pink

heart

---

take me up through your inferior vena cava  
nice and slow filling you up i can feel  
the edges of your ventricles i like to slip  
through the lips of your tricuspid valve  
take me up pulmonary a little more a little  
more until until the aorta and i pulse through  
pumping pump against this release into you  
take me back quickly i am getting cold  
i do not want to travel your body  
before we do this again

the long night in bed

---

i am afraid of symphysis  
that our bodies will slowly  
become attached  
that our time together  
will become physical  
not measured in hours  
moments but fused  
sections of skin

we began too close in  
an empty plot seeded  
too densely meeting  
in the light when we  
emerged and we talked  
and we admired and we  
talked and we merged  
helplessly

we didn't have a choice  
straining for the same bit  
of sunshine between leaves  
where we squeeze together  
the circumference of our bark  
meeting as an inverse of a spine

i may dare to slip my hand  
between the rough fleshs  
but there is no way through  
the push of golden rings  
the leaves softly brushing

if we stay too long  
we might have some  
explaining to do  
attached like this  
at the hips

—collect these brittle bones—

i will collect you

---

as a girl in the field cracks soy bean shells  
with her baby teeth her fingers  
gently rolls groove lingering seeds  
in sweat slicks of her palm  
a squeeze between forefinger and thumb  
spills out smooth beige globes  
from furry hard bulged caterpillars

the three bumped brown shell  
rattles bone seed with wind  
crackles through fields nimble  
fingers pluck pick  
a miniature harvest

sun brown skin shrinks to skeletal  
from smooth green baby slips of seed  
the stalk the leaves writhen  
a little pressure to fall into soil  
recover in dirt rolled under  
fuzzy tan cracked coffin  
seeds laid against the grain  
rubbed smooth by soy bean  
in a tight sphere—  
or to fall palmed  
between the hands of a girl



i beg for your touch

---

in my muscle filled tongue  
already lost to the involuntary  
shudders clacks clack cla  
in the sucking dry spread  
from lips to gums to tongue.

then, i beg for your touch  
in my splintered skin hands  
when my throat only  
pushes through the drops  
from slowly melted ice

i beg for your touch  
until i can't

for years we slept separately  
first we migrated to edges of our sheets  
sacrificed warmth for the cool breeze of night  
along out sides for the strip of sheets

then to single beds  
the break of hardwood  
the end of accidental  
brushes of ankle and elbow

and finally to the bedroom  
unoccupied by growing children

fulfilled for years by the absence  
of touch unnecessary in the keeping  
of blankets wall and floor between us  
burying the need in the curve  
of my hips around your corners  
in the sharp looks when your hand  
meets mine in the grab for milk

and now  
now the need to remember  
the fancy of our youth  
when we still curled in to the centre  
when i remembered the name  
of my lower stirring  
when one more child seemed easy  
in the creak of the floor  
in the scratch of hardwood

now i claim my love to you  
in the beg for your touch  
as if you are going  
to forget that i am

the marys

---

i cannot handle january  
the need for my summer  
born grandmas to perish  
in the cold drifting

i share your name i do not  
want to share this greyness  
for my dying

the oak tree

---

her walks with him are slow  
to the oak tree and back  
a path cut in field  
she wants to go home even then

or without the mirror and windows  
does she imagine a youngness in her body  
against his stooped oldness  
the broad expanse of his back  
the thin flannel stretch  
the feel of old  
the nearness of bone

i have your eyes

---

i have your eyes  
and your nerves  
and your breasts  
and your hair  
that now lay  
limp against the pillow  
and desperate stares  
of your youth  
greying out quietly  
washing me white

silence of your lips

---

i love the softness of your flesh now  
time in bed made your skin paper sheets

i shouldn't touch you  
i might tear your cheek  
leave smudges of oil  
from my fingers  
and i am not sure  
if i should send my lip print  
with you to your grave

glandular seeping into the pallet of your epidermis  
i am all over you in tiny blotches

the husband

---

they said you would forget everything  
your wedding your children your home  
who slipped the cotton you wore  
over your shoulders across your back

but he would start to cry  
rub behind his glasses  
slow shudders across his chest  
in a vinyl chair next to your bed

and at this you would sit up  
struggle against the brittle wrist  
twist from the broken hip  
to clutch him with your veined hands

with pressure to lean in lean in  
dry sticky lipped and toothless  
for one kiss one kiss and  
*i love you*

sex and parents

---

remember to love each other  
one morning

no one peeks in the window  
but if they could

for me your sex is never weird  
despite the absence

like a desperate want i crave  
voyeuristic

to see a kiss, a hug, a validation  
for your marriage

a thumb on stamp  
slowly rub away the expiry



the touches that slip through the day

---

as they stand here against the fall sky  
we drop into the gorgeousness of season

when under the porcelain light he slips  
up her sleeve

and strokes her almost nothingness of hair

clearly

---

your death was too long for me  
to remember anything before the dying  
forever you are sinking into white  
sheets and moaning

yesterday you were bored

---

so you lowered your blood count  
paled your face in fake menstruation  
blood laden flannel against your thighs  
like a girl waking up in adolescence

it was proof of your womanness  
in this room with the man  
who stopped calling you beautiful  
and his dead wife's name  
in this room with the woman  
always waiting for her husband  
who used to occupy the other bed  
in this room where you not a woman  
but a body in sheets immobilized

so you made yourself bleed  
for pain and for colour

—calculating space—

a little melody in the field

---

fill up my hips with your lips we sip  
these tips you form with lip and slip  
into my hands the grass we stand on  
across these hills the blush of my skin  
flush tinted land of roaming hands  
we sink in sifting sand oh fill up these hips  
we split into two into three do me my dear  
and take me back to oh my my sigh lent lips

$$A=\pi r^2$$


---

it is cold.

let me measure our area.

i declare the centre as the point where i left your right.

radius is any step away.

therefore:

(pie in our sky)(step back of my right)(your left)

=

the space we take up here.

a circle of cement with the height at our lips, and the volume our kiss.

$$V = \pi r^2 h$$

---

the diamond between our four feet  
the centre point between our toes  
pick a radius from there to a heel  
and another—multiply measure  
an arc from my right to my left  
put us in a cylinder

we'll prove the volume of this kiss  
with the heat behind our backs

when she sees you

---

she will fidget nervously pulling her skirt here just over the kneecap in the awkwardness

she cannot make her orbicularis oris full sinuous everted move in the right words

she cannot make the man on the couch with the six girls playing around and around him  
while he sleeps leave

she will force through her pars marginalis her pars peripheralis her fucking lips screams  
and screams crying pushing but

he will slowly slumber there heavy on her chesterfield

she will travel between the room with the you she cannot kiss and the heavy heavy man

you will sit there look at records

you don't even see the man

you don't understand why her zygomaticus minor and depressor labii inferioris move  
move and then pause when she looks at you

you will not help her lift the man and

she keeps looking and looking and looking at your lips not moving not telling you why  
she's even there



bus stop confession

---

you have stolen onto my neck  
but i think it's a dream

wine blush  
broken capillaries

you move out of your coordinates too easily

later it will be stupid to tell you these things  
it was wrapped round and round with a scarf  
the only time you've ever been near my neck

blindfolded on a map

---

you broke the rules  
you picked me up  
you swung me around

i am not sure which direction  
you wanted me to move in  
after you put me down

maybe you didn't realize  
that i would circle you  
in nervous stutters

but you must know  
it will take me a few days  
to find my place again

harmless

---

but, oh, you grab my hand  
quick  
put it under your shirt  
sweat soaks the side of my hand  
i pull away  
left cold along the edges

and, oh, that couldn't stop  
my pounding brain  
from crawling  
inside your cotton  
from licking  
the slick saltiness  
over and over  
with my imagined tongue

we are all numbers  
all measurements  
i am imperial  
living close to the border  
all these years keeping  
the american tongue  
i am feet i am pounds  
i am weathered in fahrenheit  
the enormity of the metric system  
frightens me twelve to thirty  
in the flip of a ruler  
like two naughty people  
lying against each other

we lie here like rulers  
tucked in a grade school desk  
you are metric born deep  
in the centigrade  
grown in meters  
weighted in kilograms

as we lie i straighten us  
you count down my spine  
in centimeters two by two  
with your lips  
i use my knuckles in inches  
to gauge the opening  
and closing  
between our bodies

the walk

---

it is cold it is winter and

i do not trust this distance  
between us moving  
headlights split  
through linked arms  
triangle creases  
move parallel  
behind us  
it is easier to chart  
our pavement motion

we will sneak  
into bus stops  
for warmth  
two fogged figures  
press into corners  
into necks  
there are three inches  
to gain in the turn  
of my head

i am pressing  
blindly into the curve  
of the brackets  
of my equation  
that keep me  
from kissing you

## wedding dream

---

it is wrong my dress green the ceremony too short the words spill across his face loosely  
tuxed banded middle fingers in the switch i lose it nowhere no skitter no flash of gold i  
can not stand in a large room trapped by cake family tables i search for you your lips to  
heave this into gaping halls and now the room is empty snowing white and shaken i love  
this whitest relief this soft melting but then no one is there i am jade and strewn in the  
middle of an abandoned dance until i see you and i drag you to a stall the boys washroom  
the place he will not look for me and i want your arms i want the tightness of walls i want  
the tangle of feet the bump of knees the stroke of space filled in my dream he is nowhere  
and           you           are           everywhere           in           and           around

i want to establish  
a casualness  
a quick brush of lips  
the efficient confession  
of guilt to whisk dry lips  
against maybe wet lips  
we have been reduced  
to hugging somehow  
the flattened breasts  
along your ribs  
my almost brush of heat  
against your fly  
and i am told it is less  
intimate than the quickness  
a peck necessitates  
but i am guilty  
to want this  
for me it will only serve  
to habituate myself  
make it un-new  
make me stop  
thinking about running  
my tongue through the seam  
along the gap of your teeth  
which could all be  
accomplished in the slip  
of kiss when you come  
and when you go

vermillion borders

the closeness of foreheads is dangerous  
i think my hand just touched your hand  
but i am not willing to tilt my head to see  
oh, i'm sorry, i didn't mean to make you  
the bones, even your bones are shaking  
the breath from those words is warm  
it's the naming, like breath held and  
released  
did you know i can count the holes  
in your eyes, in your skin, in your face?  
hey  
now i can smell your saliva, it is wet  
please we need this space  
we've done so well at this line  
you have my hand, i'd like it back  
you have taken the bones,  
but i still can't slip away, let go  
how much longer can we keep this line?  
you already have my bones  
your breath, i am trying to not  
test the circumference of your lips  
i cannot reduce my tongue to numbers  
maybe i should go, but that pink edge

the outline of lips

dangerous, yes, i can feel your heat  
and i think there might be warm parts  
below  
of course not, you never are  
make me what? stretch out to touch you?  
capitate, triquetral, lunate, schaphoid  
our palms are warm, it only makes sense  
am i holding you?  
you must be looking intently  
are you wearing contacts?  
you know, i could lick your nose with my tongue  
and now i know the exact distance  
i measured it with muscles  
interlacing with layers  
i'm not ready to give it up yet  
but we should maintain this space  
okay  
not long, i just noticed the edge of your lips  
did i not give them back with your hand?  
the hairs of your face hold my breath  
damp follicles in your filtrum  
please don't close your eyes  
it's so tempting, isn't it?



the palm of the hand has thick and glabrous skin richly supplied with sweat glands

---

here the boundaries of our bodies so carefully kept the stretch between our fingers winter scaled dryness avoiding the moistness of our lips and lower wetness we tiptoe around dry footprints we need the grip of the epidermis hair follicles avoiding the slip of our moist

but

we leak tiny drops the hotness between the palms the quickly evaporated atmosphere rolling across the ridge the undulating seam under the stretch of alternating fingers the boundary so carefully timidly crossed your damp curls inside my pores my wet yours

my poetry has grown from a necessary stress on the line break, the pause, the held or exhaled breath—and then, to recognize the weight of the word at the end of the line. there is the poem, the phrase, the line (and the break), and the word. in analyzing, we anatomize each component operating to the fingertip—the end of the line hanging out there vulnerable.

let us look at an obvious one. the early reveal in the barn<sup>1</sup>. the “and” (her nipple), the conjunction between her and the boy, the little piece that sticks out from the poem is a drawn out and intentional pattern of line breaks working both visually and interpretively. both the person on the nipple and the reader hang off this deliberately placed “and” suspended petrified out in the centre of the poem like a women backed against a wall wondering what the world will do with her nipples. the “and”, much like the woman’s nipple, allows for an open and vulnerable interpretation into the poem or the person. it is just a little naked “and” out there.

so the breath. the breath is intentional, intrinsic, inherent, my favourite ins. Olson: “the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE” (870). and from the line to the breath to the heart. physically. hold the breath when the poem does not allow for breathing, when the space is cramped and tight. held breath makes the heart beat faster, nervous, contained, and panicked. never opening “wide enough to let you in not even your finger.”<sup>2</sup>

or.

take the line  
short  
and tender  
the breath  
should be  
exhaled in bits  
a slowly drawn  
arc that never  
is quite  
let go

---

<sup>1</sup> from “between acts”

<sup>2</sup> from “the neighbour boy”

until  
the end

the building of pressure in long thin poems.

or.

Phyllis Webb uses the small poem. like a little box.

“Doubled up i feel  
small like these poems  
the area of attack  
is diminished”

i too can  
acknowledge  
vulnerability  
in the wide  
spread across  
the page

“lining your concavity  
quiet and tight”<sup>3</sup>

the line—shortened and lengthened like a hesitant body extending and retracting.

because of Olson, a poem cannot be read without thinking of the breathing, of the pauses.  
“a contemporary poet leaves a space as long as the phrase before it, he means that space  
to be held, by the breath, an equal length of time”(Olson 873). tell me that is not what is  
taken into consideration.

so i use it. breathing can excite nervousness, the nerves, what resonates in the body. the  
heart beat, the rhythm of our interactions. another in.

Webb compares her line to a tulip wilting on the glass: “That is what I am coming to, the  
physics of the poem. Energy/Mass. Waxy splendour, the massive quiet of the fallen tulip  
petals. So much depends upon: the wit of the syntax, the rhythm and the speed of the  
fall, the drop, the assumption of a specific light, curved” (920).

---

<sup>3</sup> from “consummate ‘c’s”

i compare my lines to a body. the curves into space, tangled limbs of nerves straining to be touched.

i like this quotation from Mouré: “physical body. image of the whole physical body must always be there. Not truncated, not synecdoche, but the physical image speaking directly the entire body at once” (85). she insists on the body. so do i. in form and content.

i do not take risks with my margins. they stick with their backs against a wall. (almost) always projecting out, leaving nerve endings ready to be met. where i choose to leave my lines open, like the body that leaves an unending meeting of uncertainty in conversation, in physical touches that all are couched in confusion and misinterpretation, hopes and fantasies, is the place i explore. my poem is coming to meet you like i would. in nervous anticipation that some negotiation of space is going to occur.

Every woman knows the torture of beginning to speak aloud, heart beating  
as if to break, occasionally falling into loss of language, ground and  
language slipping out from under her, because for woman speaking—even  
just opening her mouth—in public is something rash, a transgression.  
(Cixous and Clément 92)

my lines are delicately broken at the ends in more than half my poems. it is like the sweat between the two palms in my poem “the palm of the hand has thick and glabrous skin richly supplied with sweat glands.” the sweat is undeniably there, but the interpretation of that sweat is unclear. between the sweat of one hand and the sweat of the other (if the other is indeed sweating) is a broken line—indeterminable. and that is where the reader comes in. from the physical to the paper, the sweat, the “tiny drops.” picture the poem and the reader as two bodies clasped, and the rolling sexual interpretation is like the sweat between the palms. the poem is like a body backed against a wall or laid on a bed. one side is safe, secure against a vertical plane. but the other side curves out against the world waiting for something to lean against it.

and the deviations—

“and

i  
am  
naked”<sup>4</sup>—

are just little flirts and twirls out onto the page—a fleeting moment of confidence. for the most part, even in the defense of my words, i am timid, hesitantly asserting the erotic nature of my poetry.

shall we get our theory on?

i walked into a book and picked up Deleuze.

What is perverse is precisely this objective power of hesitation in the body: this paw which is neither left nor right; this determination by fits and starts; this differentiation never suppressing the undifferentiated which is divided in it; this suspense which marks each moment of difference; and this immobilization which marks each moment of the fall. (Deleuze 281)

he made me think about the broken line, the unfinished sentence, the hesitation in the line— what a sexy room for interpretation. the “power of hesitation” lets me explore the perverse, the insuppressible that is faced in the negotiation of space around bodies trying to exist safely together. my poems exist in that moment of hesitation and delve into the world suppressed.

a body on the page. in topic and form. all nerves and nervousness wondering how they will be taken (apart).

and if the poem is a body negotiating space on a page, then the action reflects as a body of its own.

“if language imitates bodies, it is not through onomatopoeia, but through flexion. And if bodies imitate language, it is not through organs, but through flexion” (Deleuze 286).

Deleuze suggests that the moments of hesitation in the body are where we find the perverse. i don’t like the connotation of that word. maybe i could say “what we’re

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<sup>4</sup> from “this spring is a stretching”

uncomfortable with in our nature. our inherent sexuality.” but that’s probably too many words. not neatly suppressible enough. not one word in the exclusion of others. the action in my poem is the nervous apprehension of sex, the tentative movement towards the encounter. nervousness in interaction is “fits and starts,” and suddenly the body is uncomfortable, constrained in its inability to express itself in that given space. no longer “she cannot make her orbicularis oris full sinuous everted move in the right words.”<sup>5</sup> if this anxiety represents a moment of insuppressible functions that women desperately try to conceal, then it is perverse, shameful.

which leads to the desperate calculation of space within moments of desire that cannot be expressed healthily or openly because of constraints due to social boundaries. hence, the math, the imagery of measurement in space. the distance from getting and not getting the object of desire, a distance that can be safe or unsafe, and that uncertainty is dangerous and nerve wracking.

the connections between poets and poems comes through in how you write, what you write, what words you choose. my poetry is like a sexual fetish with rings in the skin being held suspended from the ceiling. take the body as my poem; the bits of skin being pulled taut are the connections being observed and pulled away from the body, and they all stretch along the tight skin. not all the skin is pulled, but i cannot ignore the stretch that extends from poem to another. they are all bodies being pulled.

the sex in my poetry begins in childhood. all the nervous beginnings, advancements towards the fulfillment of some sort of need. my subject acknowledges the desire for touch, that “[w]e all make sexual choices from birth onward when we masturbate, when we play ‘doctor,’ and when we kiss or touch each other” (Reiss 60). the initial section, “anticipation,” is all about sexual beginnings.

in “through the window,” the girl is discouraged in her act. there is nothing there but a fond touch and fond memories and the display of sexuality is pushed into more appropriate settings, private settings. the mother implies that there is only certain acceptable acts of expression in sexuality. perhaps a bedpost is neither the most appropriate nor the most effective method of securing satisfaction in sexual relations, but

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<sup>5</sup> from “when she sees you”

since a child's sexual nature is not entirely fully developed<sup>6</sup>, the "very acts of denying child sexuality, trying to limit it, and not discussing sex give the child the clear message that sexuality has something taboo and negative associated with it" (Reiss 43). whether my perspective coincides with or contradicts the reader's perspective, my writing opens up a dialogue between women and their sexual body, which at times is still looking for a comfortable space of expression. i write in both comfortable and uncomfortable areas in and about the physical and imagined aspects of sexual relationships. where i write and navigate my sexual language allows others to enter and discuss what otherwise might be suppressed. as a woman and human, my body has shown me numerous physical reactions to desire that remain unexpressed and shamed. i write out these moments of sexual awareness to give them a voice and a visual presence. for example, in my poem "at the farm," i discuss a small girl's longing to let the newborn kittens suckle at her breast. by writing this poem, i create a space for the maternal instincts of a child, for the need to imitate adults, for the desire to be touched intimately, and for the disjunctive timeline of a woman's physical and mental development. i try to avoid the aspect of shame within the poetry, let the poetry lie with its eyes wide open and staring, since "shame is often associated with specific defensive behaviours such as a strong urge to 'not be seen,' avoid exposure, to hide, and/or run away. Eye gaze is commonly averted and the individual may feel behaviourally inhibited" (Gilbert 6). my poems are sincere in their relation of events, but in the relation of an event that would generally be perceived as shameful, the lack of shame in the poem instantly intensifies curiosity of the situation.

"The great overlay of body shame resulting from the shaming of sexuality makes us feel that we are bad people because we live in sexual bodies" (Hastings 4) and my poetry runs up and down and all over the bodies, the evidence of shame in palms, in turned heads, in cleverly placed sunglasses. to see the effect of actions of the poem on the narrator, look to the body. how to navigate the space created by the desire, how to manage the desire in a socially acceptable way in order to fulfill the desire. the subjects of the poem are trapped by the space created. because the confusion and paralysis results from the rising excitement, it becomes unclear whether shame arises from the feelings themselves, or the

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<sup>6</sup> "Nevertheless, child sexuality is not the same as adult sexuality because children lack the full set of social scripts about how sexual relationships should be carried out. But children do explore their own and other children's bodies, they do have pleasurable genital responses, and they learn what turns them on sexually." (Reiss 43)

lack of knowing how the other person will react, how they feel. Silvan Tomkins lists circumstances that could result in shame:

Let us consider next the varieties of sources of shame which arise from love, friendship, and close interpersonal relationships. if i wish to touch you but do not wish to be touched, i may feel ashamed. i wish to look at you but you do not wish me to, i may feel ashamed. if i wish you to look at me but you do not, i may feel ashamed...if i wish to be close to you but you move away, i am ashamed. if i wish to suck or bite your body and you are reluctant, i can become ashamed. if i wish to hug you or you hug me or we hug each other and you do not reciprocate my wishes, i feel ashamed. if i wish to have sexual intercourse with you but you do not, i am ashamed....

if i can't smile at you until you smile at me, and if you can't smile at me until i smile at you, i am ashamed. if i wish to listen and you wish to listen, then i can feel shame if neither of us can talk. if i wish to kiss you but i require a show of affection before i can do so, and you can show affection to me only after you have been kissed, then i will be ashamed.

(153)

All neuroses and uncertainty, the lack mutuality in knowing where the other person stands, the desperate desire for neon signs written across the chest of the other just to know, to move out of the space shame put around the interaction. what is terrifying, is the association. from a paralysis and awkwardness in social interaction to a paralysis and awkwardness in remembering the feelings associated with the event. the poem is a release from captivity. the ability to put the desire out there. and the poem works much like the social interaction. needing to be read, to be shared. and it makes the first move. laying the body out there ready to be read, eyes wide open.

within the study of shame, is the study of the blush. "Blushing results from an increased blood flow through the subcutaneous capillaries that lie close to the skin in the face, ears, neck and upper part of the chest" (Crozier 206). the most obvious, visible reaction to shame.



and “such anxieties and defensive behaviours can be heightened by the perceptions that blushing is beyond their conscious control” (Crozier 205). the sweating, the stuttering, the involuntary spasms of the body are the blushes of my poetry. “you stole onto my face a wine blush.”<sup>7</sup> the involuntary reactions to sexual stimulus. seen or unseen, they affect the course of action. they make it uncertain.

these moments articulated throughout these poems are moments based in the skin, in the touch, a dermatographic and sensual experience, moments fused with tendons, bone, flesh. stretched and calculated. each movement, each advance towards the reader from the poem, towards the object of desire from the subject of desire is as precise as a mathematical equation—“(pie in our sky)(step back of my right)(your left) = the space we take up here.”<sup>8</sup>—in body parts.

the sex in this is not the penis and the vagina working like steam engines but the chest and cheeks and the stuttering press. i want the sex in my poems to be in the nervous apprehension between two people, not the act itself. and this nervous apprehension creates variables and coefficients that change and expand with every breath.

sexual desire in these poems is wrought with confusion and anxiety, and boundaries are created. the space that needs to be traversed is a space that is limited and restricting. the subject keeps the desire close to her body, private. this allows the subject to retain control because “[k]eeping sex hidden is one powerful way to create some controls or boundaries. Cultures are fraught with the results of suppressing this powerful energy...As we allow sexual energy to become healthy, then outside-in boundaries become unnecessary” (Hastings 145). the subject in keeping control, though, is also restraining herself, which is unhealthy.

social interaction is laden with sexual desire, and when that desire is accented by anxiousness and tension it creates boundaries and limits that generate with shame. my poetry moves the shame from the physical body to the page. although my writing itself is tense with boundaries, struggling with its movement, it is pressing out the boundaries.

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<sup>7</sup> from “bus stop confession”

<sup>8</sup> from “ $A=\pi r^2$ ”

The creative process—in its ‘pattern of repeated dissolution and reorganization proceeding in parallel with unconscious splitting and reintegration’—affords the artist...the means of mastering trauma. The process re-enacts the splitting or disintegration effected by trauma and shame, but in a controlled way, as part of a movement toward reintegration of the self. (Clark 192, citing Rose 110)

and here we are with the issue of control again. my poetry flirts with the hesitancy of the line, the hesitant body of the poem, but i am bringing it to you. the line may be hesitant, but i am in control of the hesitancy. i am initiating this opening.

and by giving these awkward moments a voice, i give them an appropriate language instead of being pressed into silence. “The failure to attend to shame until quite recently is partially the result of the failure of scientific languages that describe inner experience. Without an accurate language of the self, shame slips quickly into the background of awareness” (Kaufman 4)—aware that it is there, without being able to speak to it or about it, mortified even more with every passing moment of silence.

perhaps “[s]hame is felt as an interruption, and it functions to further impede communication” (Kaufman 17), but i am working to make shame the mode of my speech.

i use the sex to communicate. the sexual degeneration (or not) of our bodies as we age, the sexual exploration of our bodies at all times, the sexual relation have with so many things whether we like to admit it or not, the attraction to another’s body/mind/laugh/smile/hair. i am discovering the sex in it all. but the timid sex, the sex that is sometimes denied. the focus is on the highly eroticized apprehensive foreplay. in order to explore the sex that occurs in a touch/glance/thought, which is also limited by highly neurotic worries about sex and love that always plagues actions, my writing requires an open communication and sincerity. this can be found in “The self lives where it exposes itself and where it receives similar exposures from others” (Tomkins 137). i want my poems to be physical in the reader, for readers to relate their need for touch to the need for touch in the poem.

in order for the poem and the poet to be open with the reader and speak without hindrance. “One cannot learn how to transform visceral experience into art if one writes

with the anxious awareness that his or her grandmother may be a potential reader of the poem” (Marvin 1), but i do need some vulnerability in my poems, some sense of a hesitant profession. i never write imagining that my mother will read these poems with me someday. yet i am always aware of her eyes. aware of the possibility. it helps me blush. in the action and in the poem.

i write in the moment, acknowledging the shame, but not covered up by it. my poems are naked and vulnerable, telling secrets to the reader with the body, the undeniable presence.

listen to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick for a moment:

The forms taken by shame are not distinct “toxic” parts of a group or individual identity that can be excised; they are instead integral to and residual in the processes by which identity itself is formed. They are available for the work of metamorphosis, reframing, refiguration, transfiguration, affective and symbolic loading and deformation, but perhaps all too potent for the work of purgation and deontological closure.  
(63)

i would never abandon the blush.

if there is a genre that i fit into, then it

is a poetry which implicitly insists that all we know is the body, and our only reliable way of knowing is the body’s way of knowing, whether that is a maternal knowledge and love or a daughter’s compulsive love of a cruel father’s long-shanked frame, or the gum-line tartar, its scent and texture, on a lover’s teeth. it is a poetry insisting that to know the body is a little to crack the world’s mysteries, but it is a knowledge hard to come by.  
(Flint 1)

a confession measured in body parts.

it is also an acknowledgement of these parts, the nuances of these parts. in many ways “[w]e have turned away from our bodies. Shamefully we have been taught to be unaware

of them, to lash them with stupid modesty... Woman must write her body, must make up the unimpeded tongue" (Cixous and Clément 94). i do not want to take my eyes off the bodies of my poems or deny them the right to erotic or nervous or playful or tense or anything they might feel.

and i am sincere in the moment, unflinching in awkwardness that is always present.

The *mind* of the poet: not her logic, not the linear sequence of cause and effect, not an argument. Rather, as the first word will say, "slippages": quick sidesteps of association, connections made in the play of the mind at work. The dance of the intellect in synchronicity.

In the words of Daphne Marlatt in the epigraph to *Hanging Fire*: 'sound will initiate thought by a process of association. Words call each other up, evoke each other, provoke each other, nudge each other into utterance...a form of thought that is not rational but erotic' (Scobie 246)

the movement of my language and my poems, the "pavement motion"<sup>9</sup>—the engagement becomes an equation hoping to become a jumbled pile of limbs "bracketless without form."<sup>10</sup> each word, each line, each body is so close to slipping out of form.

i speak with the "i" and the eyes open because a "story told in the third person—whether autobiography or fiction—could never be seen as confession: the female writing "i" (and the female eye) are essential here. These are narratives of sexuality, love and writing, writing being the key element" (Saint-Martin 32). i will not say it is a confession either. it is too boxed up, closed in between with a screen, the only setting that i want to see that in is with sliding doors and back porches where i can still touch the other person. so, like Lori Saint-Martin, i also

would prefer to speak of *sexual proclamations*, at least in the context of modern confessional fiction. This term is preferable both because it eliminates the under-the-table sense of shame that the word *confession* inevitably calls up, and because it emphasizes the declarative, even

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<sup>9</sup> from "the walk"

<sup>10</sup> from "this massive bed"

performative nature of women's sexuality *as brought into being through writing...* Women no longer confess; they proclaim. (43)

i proclaim my nervousness across the page in stutters.

subtly, i proclaim my womanhood through my writing as well. i write from the perspective of a woman. in my curves, in my body—it cannot be helped. although my writing is not specifically gendered, the femininity slips through with breasts and menstruation—the indelible assertions of our sex. because woman's sexual organ is internal, the stress on the feminine body to express itself visibly is both intimidating and frustrating. their most protruding feature (the breasts) are only acceptable when covered, which signals them as sexual; women are constantly required to balance sexuality with propriety. if the balance is off, then the awkwardness that arises from the situation results in shame over the sexual uncertainty. i do not want to deny masculinity the feelings of anxiety and shame in sexual relations. i simply speak from a woman's perspective. a perspective that has long been knowledgeable in settling her sexuality in society. both a male and female may worry about body parts brushing against another body, but the physicality and awareness of space are different. Cixous and Clément have said that

Women have almost everything to write about femininity: about their sexuality, that is to say, about the infinite and mobile complexity of their becoming erotic, about the lightning ignitions of such a minuscule-vast region of their body, crossings, advances, sudden and slow awakenings, discoveries of a formally timid region that is just now springing up.  
(Cixous and Clément 94)

i write about sex here by addressing the necessary awkwardness of sexual advances. my poems are springing up with nipples, palms, sweat, lips, and all. the nervousness and the desire need to be written in order to be recognized as not shameful but a source of sexual stimulation and enjoyment. by writing the awkwardness here, the physical excitement of nervousness is kept and the shame is recognized but does not hinder the expression of desire.

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